Skeena Region

Management Direction Statement

March 2003

for Choquette Hot Springs
Provincial Park

British Columbia

Ministry of Water, Land
and Air Protection
Environmental Stewardshi
Division

105-07025/

Choquette Hot Springs Provincial Park Approvals Page

Forward

This management direction statement for Choquette Hot Springs Provincial Park provides management direction until such time as the plan is revised. Ongoing consultation between Environmental Stewardship Division and First Nations may require changes to this management direction statement. Aboriginal rights are honoured and protected within the park.

The implementation of strategies identified in the MDS will be dependent on available funding and Environment Stewardship Division priorities.

Approvals

Regional Manager
Skeena Region
Environmental Stewardship Division

Assistant Deputy Minister
Environmental Stewardship Division

This management direction statement was developed through direction received from the Cassiar Iskut-Stikine Land and Resource Management Plan

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Choquette Hot Springs Provincial Park
Management Direction Statement

Introduction

Purpose of the Management Direction Statement

Management direction statements (MDS) provide strategic management direction for protected areas that do not have an approved management plan. Management direction statements also describe protected area values, management issues and concerns; a management strategy focused on immediate priority objectives and strategies; and, direction from other planning processes. While strategies may be identified in the MDS, the completion of all these strategies is dependent on funding and funding procedures. All development associated with these strategies is subject to the Parks and Protected Areas Branch's Impact Assessment Policy.

Context

The provincial government designated Choquette Hot Springs Provincial Park as a Class A park by order in council under the *Park Act* on January 25, 2001. The park is presently named and described in Schedule C of the *Protected Areas of British Columbia Act*. Choquette Hot Springs has been identified as a Goal 2 Special Feature protected area in recognition of its hot springs and surrounding thermal wetland and riparian environments. The Cassiar Iskut-Stikine Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) recommended the designation of Choquette Hot Springs as a protected area.

Choquette Hot Springs Provincial Park covers about 48 hectares directly across the Stikine River from Great Glacier Provincial Park, about 10 kilometres from the Alaska State border, and 120 kilometres southwest of the community of Telegraph Creek (See Figure 1). Currently, no road provides access to the remote area. Roads may be built near to the protected area in the future as part of mining development. The small provincial park area lies within the asserted traditional territory of the Tahltan First Nation.

Scientists and residents of the region consider Choquette hot springs the most significant thermal hot springs on the Canadian side of the lower Stikine River. Over 15 hot springs issue from granitic rocks at the base of the valley wall or from mud just beyond on the valley floor. Many hot springs are within a tidally-influenced area and are underwater at high tides. At least four hot springs remain above the high tide and beaver pond flooding. These hot springs range in temperature from 50 to 60 degrees Celsius. The water is odourless and tasteless, with a low mineral content[1]. The hot to warm water allows vegetation to grow year round. A small lake lies in the north of the park.

Choquette hot springs is one among several hot springs phenomena in the Lower Stikine River region. The most attractive hot springs for people using the lower Stikine River is Chief Shakes hot springs located six kilometres inland from the confluence of the Stikine and Ketili rivers in Alaska and five kilometres south from the Canadian and United States of America international boundary. The Chief Shakes hot springs are hot and the United States Forest Service maintains bathing facilities at this location[2]. The Barnes Lake (Paradise) Warm Springs are located on the

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[1] Woodsworth, Glenn Hot Springs of Western Canada, Gordon Soules Book Publishers Ltd., West Vancouver, Canada, 1997, Pp. 252 – 253.
[2] Ibid. Pp. 254 -256.

north side of the Stikine River about two kilometres west of the Canadian and United States of America international boundary. These springs are seldom visited because they are only warm and difficult to find[3]. Sphaler Creek Warm Springs are near the head of Sphaler Creek, a large tributary of the Stikine River. These springs are tepid and lie about 25 kilometres northeast of Choquette hot springs[4].

Other thermal springs in the general region include Iskut River Hot Springs Provincial Park on the west bank of the Iskut River about 100 kilometres south of the community of Iskut and Mess Creek warm springs west of Mount Edziza Provincial Park.

Nearby, Great Glacier Provincial Park, on the west side of the Stikine River, contains a spectacular glacier with high scenic value a short distance above the river. About 100 kilometres to the northeast lay a series of large protected areas, including Mount Edziza Provincial Park, Stikine River Provincial Park and Spatsizi Plateau Wilderness Provincial Park. These parks protect entire ecosystems and offer a wide variety of backcountry recreation opportunities.

Provincial Park Attributes

Conservation

- One of only two provincial parks in the poorly represented Central Boundary Ranges Ecosection (1.11%); Choquette Hot Springs Provincial Park's contribution is minimal (0.2% of overall representation) given its small size.
- Contributes minimally to the underrepresented (7.46%) CWHwm (wet maritime coastal western hemlock biogeoclimatic subzone).
- Protects hot springs with associated uncommon vascular plant, invertebrate, algae and Archaebacteria[5] species.
  - ➢ The Prince Rupert Regional Protected Areas Team ranked these hot springs and associated wetlands as biologically and physically exceptional.
- Conserves important moose wintering area (because of the special microclimate), a wildlife mineral lick and productive waterfowl habitat.

Recreation and Tourism

- Contains potential for moderate recreational use of hot springs by river recreationists stopping to camp at Great Glacier Provincial Park across the Stikine River; current use of the hot springs is low because of difficult access, extensive mud areas and the lack of developed pools.

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[3] Ibid. Page 254

[4] Ibid. Page 252

[5] One of the three main clades of life to originate on Earth, the Archaebacteria are distinguished by cell walls with pseudopeptidoglycan or protein components, and cell membranes composed of branched hydrocarbons linked to glycerol molecules.

Modern-day Archaebacteria are found in extreme environments, such as areas of intense heat or high salt concentration – source Internet - College of Sciences

Click here for Figure 1: Regional Context Map - 1,230 kb pdf

Commercial Business Opportunities

- Provides low to moderate commercial business opportunities for guided river rafting, canoeing and fishing tour groups based on the special features of this park. This business opportunity is best developed as part of a systems approach where several provincial parks, protected areas and Crown land areas along the lower Stikine River are included in the tour to give clients a broad and interesting program.

Cultural Heritage

- Named after Alexander (Buck) Choquette, the first miner known to have explored the Iskut River area in the 1860s.
- Possibly a First Nations legend site in association with the Great Glacier on the opposite shore.

Significance in the Protected Areas System

- Conserves provincially significant unusual plant, invertebrate and bacteria communities associated with the hot springs.
- Protects significant waterfowl habitat.
- Protects regionally significant moose winter browse and mineral lick associated with hot springs and their special microclimate.
- Provides opportunities for hot springs recreation close to the Stikine River - complements camping, scenic viewing and hiking opportunities offered by Great Glacier Provincial Park across the Stikine River.

Land Uses, Tenures and Interests

Access

Choquette Hot Springs Provincial Park is remote. Visitors reach the park by travelling along the lower Stikine River. Highway 37 runs 100 kilometres to the east. Land access may change as mining development proceeds along the Stikine River valley.

Existing Tenures

- Trapping license 621T017 contains the park. No park use permit covers this resource use.
- Guide-outfitter 621G003 territory surrounds park. No park use permit issued.

Existing Land Use Activities and Facilities

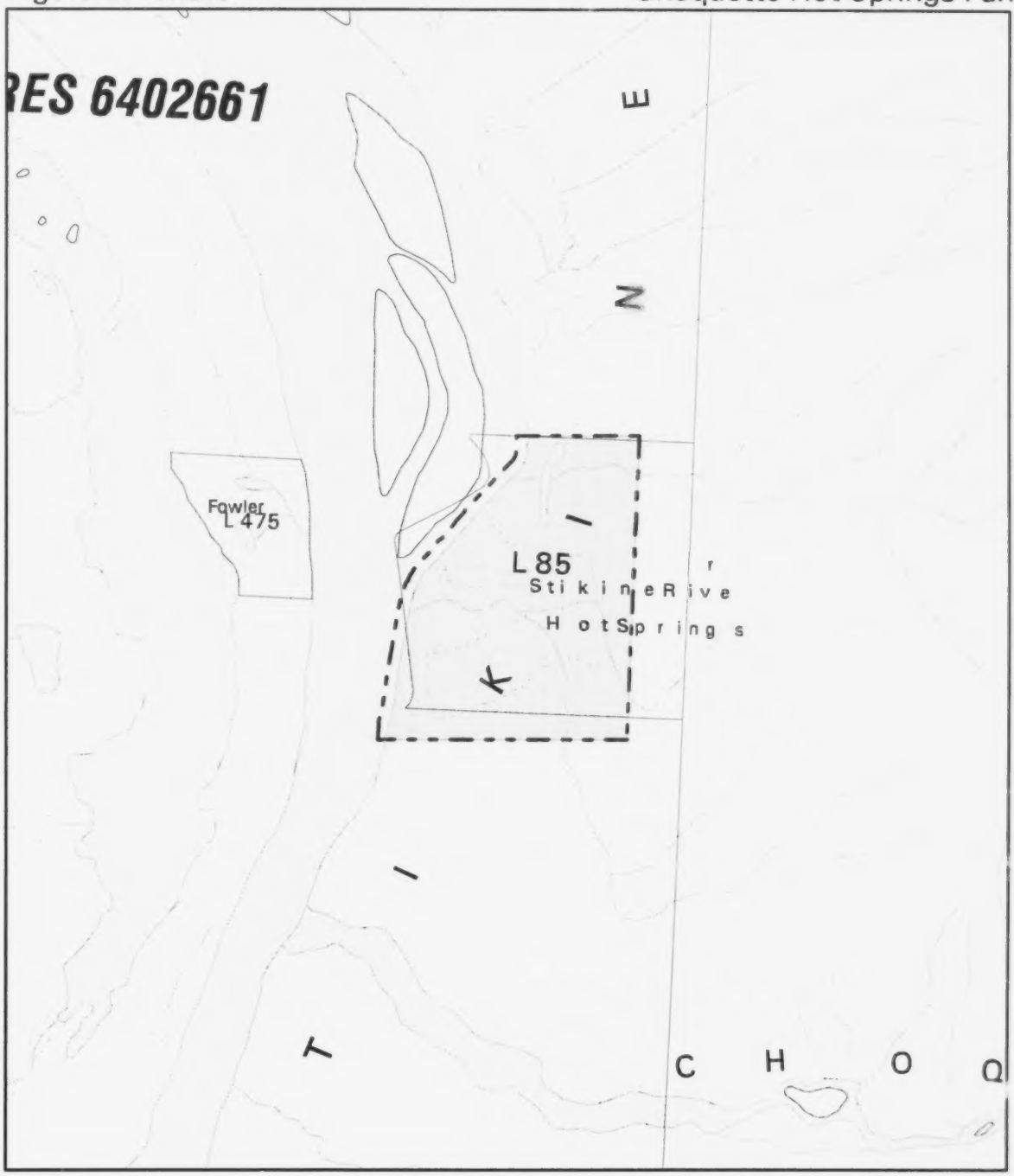
- Extremely rough trail from Stikine River banks to the hot springs requires walking through mud.
- Some people visit the hot springs to view the unusual ecosystems; few visitors sit in hot springs - water has been piped into a tub previously.

Adjacent Patterns of Land Use

- Within the Lower Stikine-Iskut Coastal Grizzly/Salmon Resource Management Zone allowing for mineral exploration but no commercial forest harvesting.
- The Stikine River borders the park to the west; Great Glacier Provincial Park lies on the opposite shore of the Stikine River.

Figure 2: Tenure

Choquette Hot Springs Park



Projection: UTM Zone 9
Datum: NAD83

Subject Area
Cadastral Boundary
(from CDMS)

0 500
m

Produced in Jan 2003 for Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection

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First Nations Interests

- Asserted traditional territory of the Tahltan First Nation.
- Tahltan First Nation has an interest in maintaining their aboriginal traditional uses and activities in the park.

Other Agency Interests

- Department of Fisheries and Oceans has an interest in the fisheries values of Stikine River side channels (no confirmed sightings of spawning salmon; no sampling done).
- Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection, Skeena Region Fish and Wildlife Science and Allocation Section, has an interest in wildlife, including moose and grizzly bears, and flora and fauna at risk, including species known to occur or potentially occurring at the hot springs or in the associated wetland.
- Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management (British Columbia Conservation Data Centre (CDC)) has an interest in the species at risk in the park.

Private and Public Stakeholder Interests

- Naturalists have an interest in the park because of the diversity of natural features and rare plant and aquatic species associated with the hot springs ecosystems.
- Fishers have an interest in the park for its angling recreation opportunities.
- Public and commercial river recreationists are interested in the park because of its strategic location as a river raft, kayak, canoe and jet-boat pullout or stop over location.
- The trapline holder is interested in the park because park regulations may place restrictions on the trapping of fur-bearing animal species.

Choquette Hot Springs Provincial Park Role Statement

The primary role for Choquette Hot Springs Provincial Park is to protect, as a special feature, the hot springs near the Stikine River. The vascular plant, invertebrate, algae and Archaebacteria communities dependent on these hot springs are uncommon and merit a high level of protection. The vegetation and minerals associated with the Choquette hot springs also provide important moose habitat.

A secondary role for Choquette Hot Springs Provincial Park focuses on the interpretive and educational values associated with these hot springs. In their natural state, the hot springs provide a valuable insight into such phenomena and contrasts with developed hot springs such as Chief Shakes Springs in Alaska. Development of the springs should be limited to those facilities that enable access but protect the fragile ecosystems in the park.

Management Commitments and Issues

Direction from Previous Planning

The Cassiar Iskut-Stikine LRMP recommended Choquette Hot Springs for protection in 2000 and directed that future management:

- Prohibit hunting;
- Maintain opportunities for commercial development compatible with the area's values.

Management Issues

The following management issues require attention:

Theme	Issue
Protecting park ecological values	• The park's natural features remain relatively unknown because an accurate inventory is incomplete. • Damage to the muddy wetlands which support special plants and ecosystem attributes and a mineral lick around the hot springs may occur because these values are extremely sensitive to human foot traffic. • The park's hot springs may be damaged by commercial development of these hot springs for moderate to intense recreational use. • The trapline owner may be operating in the park without a valid park use permit. • The park's fragile ecosystems may be at risk because road construction and development may occur close to the park (unlikely within next 10 years).
Presenting compatible outdoor recreational opportunities	• Visitor access to the hot springs is difficult because of flooded areas and mud.
Protecting cultural heritage values	• Choquette Hot Springs Provincial Park's cultural heritage features may be at risk because an inventory of such values is incomplete.

Management Direction

The vision for Choquette Hot Springs Provincial Park includes maintaining the ecological integrity of the park's sensitive wetlands and hot springs while providing compatible outdoor recreation use and appreciation by visitors travelling along the lower Stikine River.

Priority Management Objectives and Strategies

The following table describes management strategies to deal with outstanding issues raised. In addition, Appendix 1 contains a list of acceptable activities, uses and facilities for this provincial park.

Objectives	Strategies
To protect the park's special hot springs and wetland ecosystems.	• Complete an environmental impact assessment of the current impacts occurring to the park's ecological values because of visitor use. ➢ Based on the above assessment, implement proper management actions such as a) restricting access; b) formalising areas for recreational use; and/or, c) providing temporary facilities such as a boardwalk. • Undertake an inventory of fauna and flora in the park. ➢ Focus the highest priority on an accurate survey of the hot springs; ➢ Second priority should be directed at compiling data on rare plant and animal species associated with the hot springs; ➢ Third priority should be focused on documenting the extent and significance of the park's wetlands and the plant and animal species dependent on these environments. ➢ Complete this inventory before any long term recreation facility development is considered. • Manage recreational visitor use to ensure the park's

Objectives	Strategies
	ecological values are sustained, particularly the hot springs, vulnerable plant communities and wildlife habitats. • Work with Ministry of Energy and Mines to reduce potential impacts on the park caused by any industrial activity (e.g. an access road constructed next to the park boundary). • Contact the trapline owner to place this consumptive resource use under a valid park use permit if operating in the park. See if the owner is receptive to removing the park from the trapline. • Request the Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection, Skeena Region Fish and Wildlife Science and Allocation Section to remove Choquette Hot Springs Provincial Park from the guide-outfitter territory 621G003. ➢ Ensure that the Region 6 Hunting and Fishing Regulations Synopsis list of provincial parks, recreation areas and protected areas open for hunting for the 2003/2004 hunting season does not include Choquette Hot Springs Provincial Park.
To enhance the park's outdoor recreation opportunities and protect outdoor recreation features	• Evaluate options to develop a trail to the hot springs, following the impact assessment study. • Maintain opportunities for public use and commercial business opportunities that are compatible with achieving the park's roles in the protected areas system. ➢ Determine "compatible" opportunities through the Parks and Protected Areas Branch's Impact Assessment Policy procedures. • Prohibit hunting for reasons of public safety.
To protect the park's cultural heritage values	• Investigate and collate, in cooperation with the Tahltan First Nation, existing information on cultural heritage values within Choquette Hot Springs Provincial Park. • Meet with the Tahltan First Nation to discuss issues that affect the protection and management of Choquette Hot Springs Provincial Park.
To provide information to the public about the park	• Ensure information about Choquette Hot Springs Provincial Park on the official Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection web site is accurate and current. • Emphasise the park's conservation role rather than outdoor recreation themes.

Consultation and Future Planning

Environmental Stewardship Division will continue to consult with the Tahltan First Nation through the Tahltan – Environmental Stewardship Division Protected Areas Committee, and will meet with local stakeholders and resource users as issues arise.

Zoning Plan

All of Choquette Hot Springs Provincial Park is placed within a Special Feature Zone which entails the following:

Special Feature Zone

Objective: To protect and present significant natural or cultural resources, features or processes because of their special character, fragility and heritage values.

Zone Description: Covers the entire park (48 hectares).

Management Guidelines: High level of management protection with ongoing monitoring. Oriented to maintaining resources and, where appropriate, a high quality recreational and interpretative experience. Active or passive management depending on the size, location, and

nature of the resource. Visitor access may be restricted to preserve the recreation experience and to limit impacts.

- Note: Hunting will not be allowed as directed by the Cassiar Iskut-Stikine LRMP.

Figure 3: Zoning

Choquette Hot Springs Park

Projection: UTM Zone 9
Datum: NAD83

Special Feature

Protected Area Boundary

0 500

m

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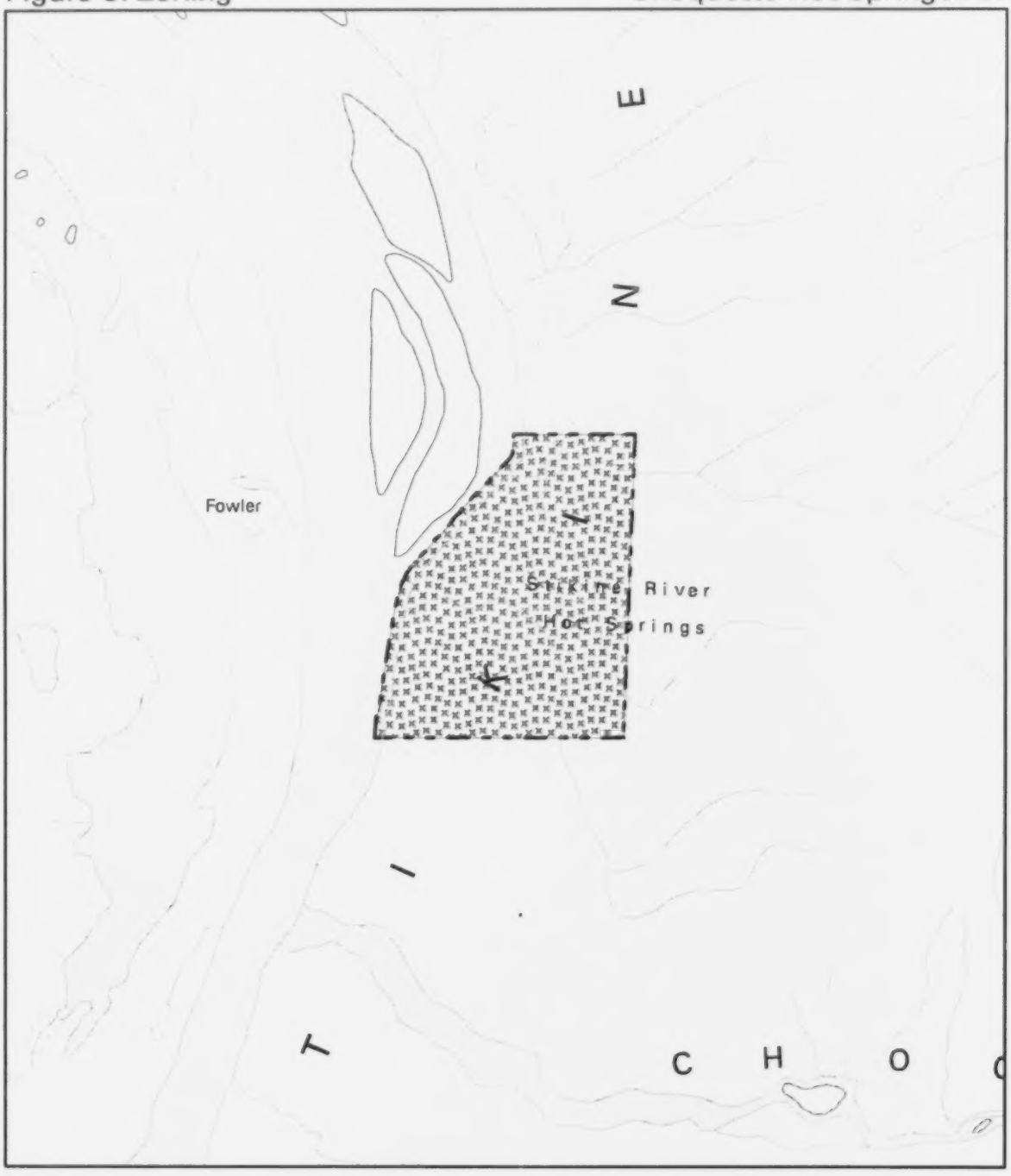
Figure 3: Zoning

Choquette Hot Springs Park



Projection: UTM Zone 9
Datum: NAD83

Special Feature

Protected Area Boundary

0 500

m

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Appendix 1. Choquette Hot Springs Provincial Park
Table of Acceptable Activities, Uses and Facilities

Activity/Use/Facility	Acceptability
Aboriginal traditional uses and activities	Y
Hunting	N
Fishing	N
Trapping	Y
Grazing (domestic livestock)	N
Recreational gold panning/rock hounding	N
Utility corridors	N
Communication sites	N
Horse use/pack animals	N
Guide outfitting (hunting)	N
Guide outfitting (fishing)	N
Guide outfitting (nature tours)	Y
Guide outfitting (river rafting)	Y
Cat-assisted skiing	N
Ski hills	N
Commercial recreation (facility-based)	M
Commercial recreation (non-facility-based)	Y
Backcountry huts	M
Water control structures – soaking pools or water lines to carry hot water to commercial developments.	M
Fish stocking and enhancement	N
Road access	N
Off-road access (snowmobiling)	N
Off-road access (motorised)	N
Off-road access (mechanical activities)	N
Motorised water access	N
Aircraft access	Y
Fire management (suppression)	N
Fire management (prescribed fire management)	N
Fire management (prevention)	N
Forest insect/disease control	N1
Noxious weed control	N1
Exotic insect/disease control	N1
Commercial filming	M
Scientific research (specimen collection)	M
Scientific research (manipulative activities)	M

Y = allowed subject to conditions identified in the management direction statement or management plan
M = may be permitted if compatible with protected area objectives
N = not allowed
N1 = allowed for expressed management purposes only
N2 = present and allowed to continue, but not normally allowed